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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1247
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR JTF-BRAVO PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHTG/USDAO TEGUCIGALPA HO PRIORITY
RUEHTG/USMILGP TEGUCIGALPA HO PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001249

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: WATER RATIONING IN TEGUCIGALPA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1052

11. (U) Summary: Local water authorities in Tegucigalpa predict shortages during the dry season of this drought year, and have begun rationing city water services. The manager of the water company hopes that the combination of rationing and drilling new wells will enable the city to continue providing water until the next rainy season. While exacerbated by the drought, a shortage of water is a perennial problem for Tegucigalpa. Long-term solutions are still on the drawing board. International organizations that had pledged funds for water system development or repair withheld funding as a result of the June 28 coup. End Summary.

12. (U) A shortage of water is a perennial problem in Tegucigalpa. Every year as the dry season approaches, the municipality places restrictions on water use, with fines for infractions such as using a hose to wash cars and sidewalks or overwatering gardens to the point of runoff. Drought conditions (reftel) have made this year's situation more severe than normal, and the water service, the National Independent Aqueducts and Sewers Service (SANAA), not only plans to fine water wasters, but is now rationing water also.

13. (U) As reported in reftel, the departments surrounding the capital have had less than normal rainfall because of El Nino. Since mid-October, rainfall has remained below the normal level in these areas, but sufficient to prevent widespread crop failures and food shortages. As we enter the dry season, which usually means five or six months of almost no rain, reservoirs which supply water to the capital are at about 65 percent capacity. As reported in local newspapers, SANAA predicts that, without any rain or conservation measures, reservoirs will run dry by April. Jack Arevalo, manager of SANAA, told reporters that the water service has begun rationing, with the hope of making water supplies last until the next raining season, which starts in June.

14. (U) Many houses have cisterns or water tanks that receive water on a periodic basis through city pipes. Other families use community faucets that also supply running water on a rotating schedule. Under the system of rationing, residents will receive water half as often. That is, if they have been receiving water every day, they will get it every other day; if once a week, then once every two weeks. If they receive water only monthly, as is the case for up to 30 percent of

the central district's population that lives in underdeveloped neighborhoods, then they may be left without running water and would need to depend on water delivery by truck. Hospitals and hotels are exempted from the rationing rules.

¶5. (U) Plans for a new dam that would supply additional water during dry season have been on the table for twelve years. But as projected costs increase each year, the projects seem even more unattainable. Arevalo and other local authorities have expressed to the media the hope that the newly elected mayor and president will tackle the issue once and for all. In the meantime, SANAA plans to drill ten wells in and around Tegucigalpa, at a cost of about \$200,000 each, to help close the water gap.

¶6. (U) Another problem impacting the water supply is leaking pipes. Almost every municipal water system around the world experiences some loss through leaks in the piping systems. In the United States, losses average 10%, although leakage is closer to 25% in problematic systems of older cities such as Detroit and Pittsburgh. The International Water Association cites statistics that large cities of developing countries lose around 40%. SANAA estimates that losses in Tegucigalpa are greater than 50%, but funds for the repair of broken pipes are not available.

¶7. (U) After the June 28 coup, Spain suspended funding of \$23 million intended for water system repairs. Other aid, such as \$5 million from the World Bank for water and sanitation sector modernization, was also frozen because of the political crisis. Without this aid, Arevalo reported that SANAA will be unable to complete all its projects, and will finish the year with a \$10 million deficit.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: As the newly elected president and other government leaders look forward to inauguration in January, stressed water resources will be among the many pressing challenges they will need to tackle. Drought conditions and lack of financial resources have ratcheted up the urgency. As in other areas, the situation could turn from a problem to a crisis if a political solution that would allow donor reengagement is not reached. End comment.
LLORENS